

Spartina bakeri Marsh Grass, Sand Cordgrass¹

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Introduction

Marsh grass is a robust ornamental grass that can form clumps that are 18 to 20 feet in diameter. This grass may grow from 3 to 4 feet tall, and its fine-textured, wiry leaves form a fountain spray pattern. The upper surfaces of the leaves are dark green, but the lower surfaces are light green in color. The obscure flowers of this plant may occur in the early spring but are relatively scarce. The seed heads of this grass are generally 2 to 8 inches long, but the plant reproduces mainly by rhizomes.



Figure 1. Full Form - *Spartina bakeri*: Marsh Grass, Sand Cordgrass
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Spartina bakeri*

Pronunciation: spar-TYE-nuh BAY-ker-rye

Common name(s): marsh grass, sand cordgrass

Family: *Poaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous; ornamental grass

USDA hardiness zones: 8B through 11 (Figure 2)

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant

Uses: reclamation plant; accent; border; edging; mass planting

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 3 to 4 feet

Spread: 3 to 5 feet

Plant habit: vase shape

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf shape: linear

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: more than 36 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: brown or tan

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: brown

Flower characteristic: fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit cover: unknown

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: not applicable

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: extended flooding; acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay

Drought tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerances: good

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Marsh grass can be used as an accent or border and is striking when planted in a mass. Space plants about 3 to 4 feet apart to form a mass of foliage several years after planting. It is a good native grass for use on the shorelines of ponds and streams and is exquisite when backlit by the sun. It also

is suited for planting in and around water retention and detention areas because of its tolerance for wet soil.

Grow marsh grass in full sun or light shade on medium dry to wet soils. This plant can tolerate periodic flooding during the growing season and will grow well on the margins of sand ponds and freshwater marshes. *Spartina patens* and *Spartina alterniflora* are tolerant of saline water and often grow in coastal saltwater marshes.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.